James R. Kyle, Photographer
(My Beginnings)

My interest in the science and art of Photography began about the age of twelve. At that time I was using my mother's Kodak Brownie "Hawkeye" 620 roll film camera. At first I was taking my exposed rolls to the local drug store for processing - that took one week before I would see the results.

About one year later, my friend, John Hawkins, received some photographic equipment from his uncle. We started to learn photography development by reading everything we could at the local public library.

Being that we had little money as well as a growing interest in the processing and printing of our films, we build our "darkroom areas" in our basements. We each, by our parents permission, had an area in the basement where we sealed off a corner with some large refrigerator cardboard boxes - that were taped together. This provided a reasonable light-tight room where by we could load our films into developing tanks. John had the equipment, but soon, as a Christmas present, my folks gave to me a tank, four developing trays for making prints. The chemicals were found at the local camera store.

We both continued to attend the local library for our study about three times a week. One evening, while walking home alone, I stopped by the studio of a local photographer - namely Walter Smith. He was very happy to listen to me about wanting to learn more. I ask if he needed any help around the store? He said that he could not "legally" hire me at age 13, but I could hang-out and learn a few things. About two months later I became his darkroom "monkey". (I developed his films from his clients - as well as some of mine.) I could use his equipment and chemicals to develop and print with his enlarger. I used my own paper that I got from him at a wholesale price. The only thing that Walter would not let me do was to make his prints. He told me that anyone can develop films - the printing is were the artist comes in - and no one can print another photographers artwork.

When I turned 15 John Hawkins and I became our high school photographers along with another fellow. At school (they did not have a course of study in photography) they did have a nice darkroom however. Complete with two enlargers, chemical supplies, film and paper. All images at that time were black and white photos for the school newspaper and some for the “yearbook”. I mowed a few neighboring yards for some money, and would sometimes skip lunch and kept that money to buy film. Also I saved enough to buy a 35mm Argus “C-3" from the local camera store - This was my first very own camera.

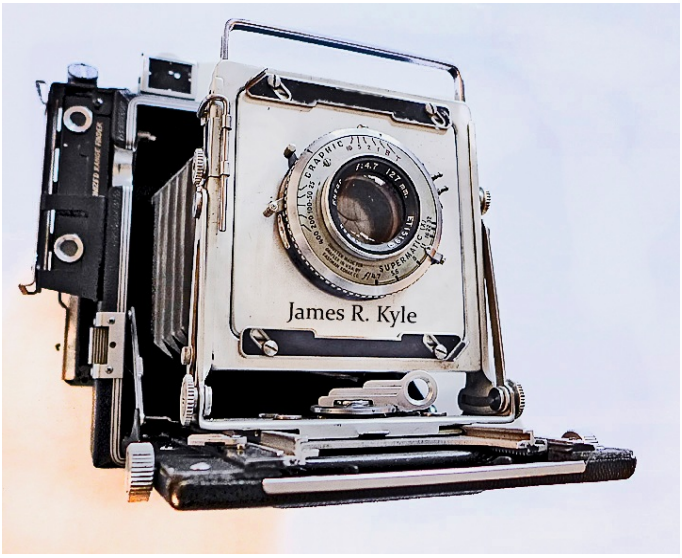
The school did have two cameras that we could use - a Rolleicord 120 roll film camera as well as a Graflex “Crown” Graphic 4X5 sheet film camera.

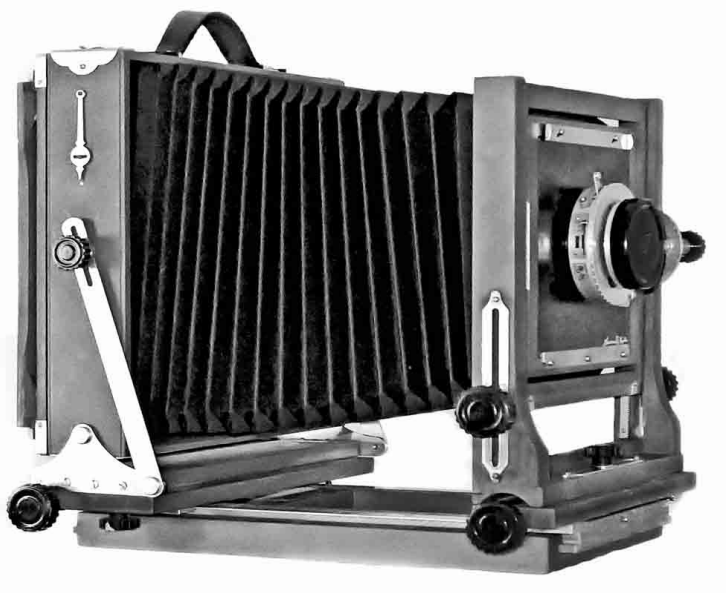
All together - these were my first “tools of the trade”.
(And now, looking back, a very good selection)

The job of the school photographer was to document sports events, school news, and anything that would require “historical preservation” of the visual sort. The yearbook was a yearly thing. The school newspaper was a weekly item and we had a deadline. I remember a few times I, and John, would take wet film and put it into the enlarger to get the prints out to the layout room. We made it happen.

After high school, and at my father's pushing, I went into the electrical trade as an electrician. I wanted to be a photographer, of course, however - my father, also being a very accomplished musician - knew that the struggle of being in the arts did not always make a good living for everyone. He would not support me in that respect and stated that I could do photography as a "side-line", as he did with his music abilities. Wanting the "biggest bang for the bucks" after my apprenticeship I entered the elite force of being an electrical lineman. Also a year after high school Water Smith retired from his work as a professional photographer.

I, of course, was on hand to help him close the studio and darkroom. He was moving to California, and was selling off most of his equipment. He gifted me his 1940 "Crown" Graphic 4X5 and his 1941 Ansco 8"X10" cameras. (I still use these today with my experiments with the Paper Negative Process and X-ray film experiments.)





So - With being an amateur photographer on my travels around the U.S. and Canada, I took my newly acquired Minolta SRT 101 - 35mm camera that a friend gave me from a tour in Viet Nam and captured all sorts of pictures.

I met other really great photographers as well, some are very famous, most are dead now. All of these fellow photographers, the public library, Walter Smith, and many, many more gave to me what they did with their work. To this day I am still learning how to make photographs. I also teach - and pass on to others what I have learned, experimented with - My successes and my failures. I do this to keep the "energy" and the knowledge going - that it would not die with me. If anyone wants to learn how to make better use of their camera, any camera, I will endeavor to teach them.

Yes - Even digital cameras. It would be easier to teach anyone with a digital camera as the results are seen right away. After learning the basics on the digital camera, and if the student wishes to learn the chemical process - so be it - I shall show them what I have learned as well.

Always remember that the camera - any camera - it is a tool in your hands. A simple Light-tight box with lens on one end and a focal plane on the other. What YOU do with it IS Your art, passion, and to record fractions of seconds of time that would be otherwise forgotten.

Thank you for the reading

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